

Want to Host Crown or Coronation?

Introduction

[Note: The original document said Coronations and Crowns... a recent law change allows those who win Crown to set their own Coronations... but, the council in this document still applies if your group is approached to do a Coronation by the new Prince/Princess.] Many groups in our kingdom have shown up in the Pale on a regular basis as hosting kingdom-level events. These groups' names are familiar to us all because they do appear so often, and they successfully pull off these events with aplomb. Now that efforts are being made to get an increasing number of groups to try their collective hands at this, some may ask, "Now we want to bid on one of those events. What do we need to do? What do we need to know that they already know?"

One of the realities that most of these groups have learned is that in their basic features these events are just like regular events – you need a site, a staff, publicity, supplies, activities, etc. The principle differences come in scale and scope. By scale and scope I mean the size of the event and how elaborately you plan to carry out the expected features of your event. In other words, how fancy you want to get. Probably the simplest way to go about covering this is to go through some steps of putting on an event, and describing how these particular kingdom-level events differ from normal events. There are certain other issues to be considered, but this is not a Complete Anachronist.

Since the original creation of this document, the position of Kingdom Event Coordinator has been created. The KEC is the liaison between you, the Crown and the Seneschal on all things related to making the event successful and any site needs the Royalty may have. They also will be the one evaluating your bid and making sure you've covered everything in it and that it meets the criteria for hosting a Kingdom level event before passing it on to the Royalty and the Seneschal.

Finding a site

This is always the first thing you have to accomplish, and it is one of the two most critical decisions an autocrat/event steward can make. Almost all of your planning hangs directly on the site you choose. Here are some criteria to use for evaluating a site's suitability:

Is the site we want available in the time frame we want?

Sites capable of accommodating kingdom-level events are hard to find, and are usually booked in advance – sometimes as much as two years in advance. If your group wants to host Fall Crown Tournament two years from now, for example, the time to be shopping around for sites is now, or at least very soon. You might get lucky, but luck is not something to rely on. Coronation events, by Kingdom Law, must be held the last full weekend of September and the first full weekend of May. Crown Tournaments are to be held the third full weekend in October and Memorial Day weekend. Coronation dates can be flexible to accommodate conflicts in Their Highnesses schedule, so check with your site to see if the weekends before and after are also available.

Can we afford this site?

Large sites with good atmospheres can be expensive. Large sites without much atmosphere can be less expensive, but you might add expense with decorations. Your group has to decide what you can afford based on an expected attendance of 400-600 (see "Establishing and maintaining a budget" below) and what you can reasonably charge as a site fee without driving down attendance (usually < \$15). Don't forget that there may be some additional charges for personnel required by the site (usually an hourly wage per person) that must also be taken into consideration when calculating the site cost.

Is the site big enough?

This is about the most basic consideration when selecting a site. While a regular event can expect roughly 100-300 attendees, Kingdom-level events routinely draw 400-600, and every rare once in a while 700 or more. This means that you need adequate space for all of your activities (courts, heavy and light fighting, merchants, classes, A&S display/judging, children's activities, feast, dancing, etc.), plus room for a whole lot of people, their gear (including the needs of royalty – see "Hosting Royalty" below) and their cars. The last point is very important. 400-600 people and their gear usually come in a whole lot of cars. Also, your site needs to be large enough to accommodate moving martial activities indoors in case of inclement weather and still accommodate all those people. Adequate space is one of the most common shortcomings for events of this size. Accessibility of the site must also be considered, especially for Spring Crown and Kingdom A&S.

You'll need to find space --and potentially a couple of volunteers --for one newer activity that has been added in recent years, the Princess Tea. The Princess Tea is hosted by the Rose who stepped down at the previous Coronation. The Rose will provide the food, plates, utensils, decorations, staff, etc. (assistance from hosting group is always appreciated but not required). The only thing you have to provide is a private room/area with electricity and a few tables and chairs. You should check with the Rose (if you don't know who that is, ask the Royalty's Chamberlain / Chief of Staff) about how many people will need to be seated so you can gauge space and furniture. Access to a kitchen is a bonus. The Princess Tea is held at the same time as the Chivalry meeting which, of course, is usually scheduled very soon after the end of Crown Tourney. The Tea usually lasts one to two hours.

What about the "atmosphere"?

Of course we all want to attend events with good period atmosphere. Sometimes we can find sites (very large churches, Masonic halls, some campgrounds, etc.) that naturally have a lot of atmosphere. These are hard to find. Sites large enough to accommodate these events (various educational facilities, fairgrounds, etc.) usually are somewhat lacking in atmosphere. More often it will be up to the group to try to create an atmosphere. This can be accomplished through heraldic displays and banner or decorating the halls in the theme of the event.

<http://threegoldbees.com/projects/7-hall-decorating-in-the-sca> is a good resource if you need it.

Your staff and staffing issues

This is the other most critical decision of any event plan. In my opinion, a Kingdom level event is not the time to give an inexperienced person experience by giving them a major position on your staff. Key positions like autocrat/event steward, troll/gatekeeper, feast steward/head cook, royalty liaison, merchant coordinator, marshal-in-charge, A&S coordinator, herald-in-charge and volunteer coordinator should go those who have either done these jobs before or who have extensive experience in other areas of event staffing. Less experienced volunteers can be asked to assist these people, learn in the process and apply their new-found experience to the next event. In fact, I think that a deputy system is great for staffing kingdom-level events because it a) increases the number of capable people with the experience for the future; and b) allows people to 'try out' a staffing job to see if it's really for them. When you have an event this big, your staff is also of necessity, large.

Maintaining lines of communication between the autocrat and the staff and among the staffers is essential. Begin meeting regularly as a group at least five or six months in advance of the event and meet more often as the event approaches. Insist that they keep the autocrat apprised of developments in their areas so that no one has any nasty surprises with which to deal. The issue of scale I mentioned earlier can also apply to nasty surprises.

Establishing (and maintaining) a budget

This can be a tricky part of any event. Rather than go through all the mechanics of setting projected finances for a kingdom-level event (or any event, for that matter), again I will point out a few key issues.

- **Be conservative!** If you think you're going to have 500 in attendance, budget for 250. Try and prepare a budget for the Worst, Expected and Best Case scenarios.
- **Watch your outward flow of money.** It can slip away and get out of hand very quickly. Set low-to-moderate but realistic budgets for individual staffers. Allotting most people more than they really need for their job encourages overspending. Insist that the autocrat or financial committee clear *all* expenditures above the original allotments, and *insist* on receipts – no receipts, no reimbursements. Any expenses without receipts are considered donations to your group.
- **Glamour costs, but is it worth it?** If your site is long on atmosphere and visual interest, then your site decoration budget doesn't necessarily have to be high. As mentioned before, though, some sites will need help. How much "flash" factor you want is up to your group. How fancy do you want the site tokens? Do you want a site program? How fancy? You'll have at least one court. How do you want to decorate the court staging area? How much decoration in the feast hall? Remember that some of what you buy will be capital improvements for your group, and much will be disposable. You can also contact the Minister of Regalia, who has lots of stuff available for loan for dressing up your site. Having a contest for most period correct/looking day camp or requiring all day camps along the list field be as period as possible can help a long way with atmosphere. Encourage people to bring their heraldry and banners for display.
- **Extra expenditures will come up.** By this I mean expenses that you might not expect based on hosting regular events. Some of these are associated with hosting royalty (see "Hosting Royalty" below) but there are others: the abovementioned "glamour" and capital improvements, etc. Try to control your fiscal outlay, but don't freak out when expenses you hadn't planned on come up, or things turn out to cost more than you had anticipated. Try to work towards a compromise between the two extremes.

Putting in a bid: What do they want?

Even if the groups of a region get together and decide who can 'take' a given event, an event plan will need to be submitted for approval, especially if your group will need a loan from Curia (funds are available for this purpose). Kingdom-level event bids need to be submitted to the Kingdom Seneschal and the Kingdom Event Coordinator. The Kingdom Event Coordinator will then review the bid and let you know if there are any outstanding questions they have or if there are any concerns with the bid. Once the bid has been deemed satisfactory, they will present the bid(s) and plan(s) to the Royalty and to the Kingdom Seneschal for consideration and approval. Once a Bid is accepted, the Kingdom Seneschal will then present the bid to Curia for final approval. The Kingdom Event Coordinator should let you know if your bid was accepted by the Royalty, at which point you can begin setting the wheels in motion but the event does not become official (and shouldn't be announced outside your local group) until after Curia approves it.

There are certain logical essentials that should always be included in your bid for a kingdom-level event. Most of these are what you'd expect in your average Pale ad, but there are other elements as well.

These include:

- Group hosting the event
- Full event name if more than 'The Coronation of' or 'The Crown Tournament of'
- Event date/alternate date available
- Site address, opening and closing times
- Pictures of the Event site if it is not commonly used for local events.
- Alcohol and smoking policies
- Scheduled events
- Names and contact information of key staff: Autocrat, Royalty Liaison, Volunteer Coordinator, Troll, Feast Steward (if applicable), Seneschal of Presenting Group.
- Preliminary budget broken down by (see sample at end of document):
 - anticipated revenues through fees
 - anticipated expenses (site, feast, supplies, publicity, printing, mailing, royalty, etc.)
 - Breakeven point

You can get as basic or as elaborate as you want in the paperwork. If you know that other groups are going to be bidding against your group for the same event, give those making the decision as much information as possible, making your bid as attractive as you can – describe the advantages of the site, add directions to the site, local hotel information (see "Accommodations" below), etc. Some groups even include photos and/or video of their chosen site.

Curia approved your bid – great! Now what?

Immediately contact your local seneschal and alert your group. Review your staffing/organizational plan and call your first full staff meeting as soon as possible. Have your Royalty Liaison contact the Royal Family and Their Chamberlain to find out what Their special needs are. The Autocrat should work with the Event Coordinator to ensure the site has everything They need. The Event Coordinator is your Liaison to the Crown and should be copied on all correspondence with Them regarding the site. Contact and maintain contact with the Kingdom Event Coordinator about special needs for the event. Your event may include a Curia meeting, for example, or the Seneschal may request table space. Contact any other pertinent Kingdom officers – the Earl Marshal for Crown Tournaments, the Kingdom MOAS for Kingdom A&S, etc. Remember to treat your Kingdom officers well... they work hard for you and will work hard with you.

Accommodations

When you have 400-600 people coming in to attend a kingdom-level event, a great number of them will need someplace to stay. This is especially true of Spring Crown Tournery/Kingdom A&S since it is a two day event. The wonderful SCA tradition of 'crashing' will support some of your anticipated attendees, but obviously not all. Although it is not strictly required, you do a welcome service for your guests by investigating and publishing local hotel information in your Pale ad and your seneschal flyers.

Contact hotels/motels in the vicinity of your event *as soon as* you have a confirmed site and date. Do this as early as possible in case mundane events in town that same weekend might take up hotel space. You should ask for blocks of rooms if the hotel in question will do it, and make it clear that the incoming guest will make individual reservations and be responsible for their own bills. Try to get hotels in a range of prices to give people choices. Sometimes if you ask you can get special event rates and

other perks thrown in. It never hurts to ask. Publish the hotel name, phone number, price, block cut-off date and any other important information. People *will* appreciate it.

Hosting Royalty

Guaranteed attendance and participation by Royalty of the Midrealm (and possibly Royalty from other Realms) is one of the major differences distinguishing the Kingdom level event. There are basically three levels to choose from when dealing with Royalty at your event:

- 1) The basics
- 2) The routine customary courtesies
- 3) The ultimate.

“The basics” include:

- Maintaining regular communications with the pertinent Royalty and Their Chamberlain to try to accommodate Their wishes (Coronations and Crown Tourneys are *Their* events, after all...)
- not charging Royalty and visiting Royalty site or feast fees
- providing a private room (“Royalty Room”) for the Royalty to stow Their gear, change, eat lunch, conduct business, have some private time, etc.
- offering the services of the Royalty liaison on-site
- offering crash space
- providing reserved parking close to the building
- finding out before the event any dietary restrictions for feast from the Royalty
- providing simple snacks and drinks for Royalty and Their retainers
- setting aside a couple of feast seats near head table for the Royalty staff that will be attending Them during feast.

“Routine customary courtesies” include:

- all of the above;
- offering to find hotel accommodations to Their specifications, and perhaps agree to split the cost;
- offering a separate private room (“Royalty Room”) for visiting Royalty to stow Their gear, change, eat lunch, conduct business, have some private time, etc.
- providing extra space for meetings and scribes (who are working with Royalty)
- providing a luncheon for the Royalty and their retainers
- not charging a limited number of the Royalty staff site fees;
- Providing additional staff from the local group for schlepping gear before and after the event, retaining, guarding the Royalty room, etc.

“The Ultimate” includes:

- all of the above;
- finding and paying for Royalty hotel accommodations
- bringing site waivers to the Royalty room so that They and Their staff don’t have to stand in lines at Troll
- Designating the local assistance to the Royals into a more formal way with some sort of uniform, polearms, etc.
- Flowers decorating the Royalty room; and
- Any other courtesy or comfort your group can think of.

Miscellaneous tips

These are a few more little ideas that can help make kingdom-level events run a bit easier and more efficiently.

- Having a volunteer coordinator (Leader of the "Brute Squad",) is a great plus for organizing all those aspects that require people willing to pitch in – directing parking, setting up and breaking down merchants, night-before set-up, post-event clean-up, etc.
- Handheld radios and or cell phones are a definite plus. Kingdom level events require large sites which tend to have lots of things going on in lots of areas, and finding key staff fast is greatly facilitated by radio communications.
- If you can find a feast steward who's willing and capable, try to have a feast that seats 90 - 130. When your crowd is 400-600, that still leaves a lot of people who find dinner on their own. On that subject, making up maps to area restaurants and contacting them for sample menus, any price breaks for SCAdians, etc. is another great service for the majority of people who will not get to eat feast. Compile a three-ring binder of restaurant information to put out at the Information Table along with the maps. If you also have room for some 'off board' seating for those people who did not or could not eat feast, it is often appreciated.
- Have a designated runner, or 3, who know the area around the site for going out to get or do things during the day if necessary.
- Even if you don't have an event program, have a site map. With events this large and lots of various activities going on in all areas of the site, it's easier for people to find things themselves than it is to give individual directions to 400-600 people. Signs are also good ways to direct people to different areas of the site.

Conclusion

Hopefully this helps to de-mystify some aspects of hosting kingdom-level events and makes the prospect less daunting. There are lots of other ideas and tips that haven't been included for the sake of space, but this is intended to be an encouragement, not a manual. If you think your group might be interested in stepping up to the plate, please share this with them. The ideas they'll come up with on their own will amaze you. If you have any additional questions about how to put together a bid, the Kingdom Event Coordinator is there to assist you.

Lord Gwalchmai ap Bledig, called Malaechi
Middle Kingdom Event Coordinator 2013 - present

Modified from the original document prepared by:
Baroness Rosamund Beauvisage, OL OP
Midrealm Kingdom Seneschal 2001-2003
Mayor – Pennsic 36

(A big thank you goes to Baroness Alexis MacAlister of Beverly, OL OP, for reading over this article and making several valuable suggestions)

Sample Budget

Site Expenses:

Room	Days	Price	Total
Auditorium	2	\$ 120.00	\$ 240.00
Kitchen	2	\$ 60.00	\$ 120.00
Cicero Room	2	\$ 52.00	\$ 104.00
Lilly Hall	2	\$ 100.00	\$ 200.00
Liberty Room	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Madison Room	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Jefferson Room	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Wildcat Room	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Conf A	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Conf B	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Prairie Room	2	\$ 50.00	\$ 100.00
Commercial Building	2	\$ 95.00	\$ 190.00
Total Site Expense:			\$ 1,554.00

Other Expenses:

Named Insurance Certificate:	\$ 50.00
Total Other Expenses:	\$ 50.00
Grand Total Expenses:	\$ 1,604.00

Estimated Attendance (based on people attending for one day only; 2-day Site Fees will bring in more income.)

Proposed 2-day Site Fee: \$15.00 for Adults):

Low Estimate:	#	Price	Total
Adults:	300	\$ 10.00	\$ 3,000.00
Children:	25	\$ 5.00	\$ 125.00
Low Estimate Income:			\$ 3,125.00
Low Estimate Gross Profit:			\$ 1,521.00
Low Estimate Midrealm Profit:			\$ 760.50
Moderate Estimate:	#	Price	Total
Adults:	400	\$ 10.00	\$ 4,000.00
Children:	35	\$ 5.00	\$ 175.00
Moderate Estimate Income:			\$ 4,175.00
Moderate Estimate Gross Profit:			\$ 2,571.00
Moderate Estimate Midrealm Profit:			\$ 1,285.50
Moderate Estimate:	#	Price	Total
Adults:	525	\$ 10.00	\$ 5,250.00
Children:	35	\$ 5.00	\$ 175.00
Moderate Estimate Income:			\$ 5,425.00
Moderate Estimate Gross Profit:			\$ 3,821.00
Moderate Estimate Midrealm Profit:			\$ 1,910.50